

## Testimony regarding SB111

Submitted By:  
Mini Santosh

Members of the Appropriations committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 111. My name is Mini Santosh and I live in Danbury. I support SB 111 with the following provisions.

The child care sector is in crisis. We need workers now. Some child care businesses have closed, but many more have closed classrooms because they can't find staff. This puts them in danger of closing in the next few months.

The ENTIRE system needs equitable support across all settings. There is no room to raise tuition for parents that can't afford early care and education now.

This means we need on-going, substantial wage supplements and benefits for small private centers, nonprofit centers (including religious programs) and family child care providers.

Plus, the state funded and school readiness programs, which have not had a meaningful increase since 2015, need to have reimbursement rates generously adjusted so that they are able to continue to provide high quality care and education.

I am a Childcare Director – State funded early childhood programs who are state funded and school readiness funded, are required to exceed licensing standards, have highly qualified staff and achieve NAEYC accreditation. The commitment to quality are very admirable, but it also costs funds, state payment does not commensurate with what is being asked of the programs. In addition we have not had an increase since minimum wage was \$9.15. The current rate of \$13 is causing our programs to run at a deficit. The staff who have remained working in ECE since 2015, on average, will received a 10K increase in wages by July, but the state has not increased the payment to the program where they are employed. We cannot afford to continue to pay our staff on the reimbursement rate the state supplies.

The state legislature approved the increase in minimum wage, and legislation for SR programs defines the current reimbursement rate. These actions are causing a failing system. If childcare fails, so does our economy. We need your help to rectify the problem.

The current reimbursement rate is \$8,924 for year-round, ten hour a day programs serving working families. Without the state funded programs, many low- and middle-income families would not be able to work. Unlike privately owned businesses, state funded centers cannot raise their rates. They are required to use a sliding fee scale. These programs mainly serve working families across the state.

Without a significant increase in reimbursement rates, many of our centers serving working families in CT will close. We need CT legislators and the Governor to take action for an issue that has been ignored for far too long.

Thank you  
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